

THE GENERAL BOARD

United States Forces, European Theater

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THE ARMORED GROUP

MISSION: Prepare Report and Recommendations on the Employment,  
Organization and Equipment of Armored Groups.

The General Board was established by General Orders 128, Headquarters European Theater of Operations, US Army, dated 17 June 1945, as amended by General Orders 182, dated 7 August 1945 and General Orders 312, dated 20 November 1945, Headquarters United States Forces, European Theater, to prepare a factual analysis of the strategy, tactics, and administration employed by the United States Forces in the European Theater.

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THE ARMORED GROUP

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SECTION 1

GENERAL

1. Organization. The Armored Group Headquarters and Headquarters Company is organized almost identically with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Combat Command of an Armored Division. It thus contains the necessary staff, communication and transportation to enable it to function as the headquarters of a task force comparable in size to a combat command. Due to the training of its personnel, it is particularly suitable to command a task force predominately armored.

2. Allocation and Use. Ten Armored Groups were assigned to the European Theater and in general, one was attached to each corps. Inasmuch as the separate tank battalions were attached one to each infantry division, insofar as that was possible with the number of tank battalions available, each group was responsible for the supervision and liaison with two separate tank battalions. The group, however, was not in the chain of command or administration of the separate tank battalions, and thus had no real authority over them. Thus in the majority of cases the group commander and his staff acted in the capacity of a corps special staff section for armor, the tanks and other radio equipped vehicles being used for liaison purposes and to supplement other means of communication.

SECTION 2

OPERATIONS

3. Tactical. Practically every tank group was, at one time or another, assigned a task force mission. With very few exceptions, these were contingent or emergency missions, the troops never being assigned or attached and the operation never actually required. Two examples of tactical missions against the enemy are given below:

a. 3d Armored Group (V Corps, First Army) - During the period 17 to 30 September 1944, this group conducted operations against the Siegfried Line, destroying pill boxes and fortifications. The troops used varied with each days operations, consisting as a rule of units from the 741st and 747 Tank Battalions and one or more battalions of the 110th Infantry Regiment of the 28th Infantry Division.

b. 17th Armored Group (Third Army) - During the period 4 to 9 March 1945, and while attached to the 76th Infantry Division, the 17th Armored Group was the headquarters of a task force operating against the enemy from the vicinity of MÖCKEL, Germany (L1244) in an attack east across the KYLL River and beyond. The force consisted of: 702d Tank Battalion, 1st and 2d Battalions, 385th Infantry (Mtz), 355th Field Artillery Battalion, Battery C, 364th Field Artillery Battalion, Company B 808th Tank Destroyer Battalion, Company B, 301st Engineer Battalion, Battery B, 778th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion, 76th Reconnaissance Troop, one platoon, 997th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company, Medical Detachment, 301st Medical Battalion, Military Police Detachment, 76th Military Police Platoon, Prisoner of War Interrogation

Detachment and Air Support Party.

4. Other Missions. Upon stabilization of the front in September 1944, various missions were assigned to the armored groups such as:

a. Operation of Corps Rest Centers (6th Armored Group, 7th Armored Group).

b. Organization of Corps rear area defenses (7th Armored Group, 17th Armored Group).

c. Administration of provisional Military Government (11th Armored Group).

d. Supervision of schools (Flame thrower school, 6th Armored Group).

e. Supervision of special training (Mine exploders, 9th Armored Group).

5. Final Solution. In the fall of 1944 it became apparent that armored divisions required three rather than two combat commands. The reserve command was insufficient in size to operate in the same manner as the combat commands. At the same time it was recognized that there were insufficient missions for armored groups to justify their retention as such. The necessity for a corps armored section was recognized, but the entire armored group was not required for this role. Consequently the practice of dividing the armored groups into two parts arose. A small section, usually headed by the group commander became the Corps Armored Section. The remainder of the group was attached to an armored division, where it was assigned to the reserve command. The 3d Armored Group was the first so employed. On 28 October it was assigned the dual role, 9 Officers and 21 enlisted men being attached to corps headquarters and the remainder to the 5th Armored Division. By the end of the war, this practice had become general.

### SECTION 3

#### FACTORS AFFECTING ARMORED GROUPS

6. Committee Studies of the Theater General Board have resulted in the following recommendations materially affecting the functions of the Armored Group:

a. Inclusion of a tank regiment in each infantry division, by which the infantry division assumes responsibility for the training and employment of infantry support tanks (Study Number 15, Organization, Equipment and Tactical Employment of the Infantry Division, and Study Number 50, Organization, Equipment and Tactical Employment of Separate Tank Battalions).

b. Organization of the armored division into the equivalent of three combat commands (Study Number 48, Organization, Equipment and Tactical Employment of the Armored Division).

c. Organization of a Headquarters, Special Equipment Troops to command all armored special equipment units (Study Number 52, Armored Special Equipment).

7. The Operation of Armored Task Forces by armored groups was the rare exception rather than the rule in the European Theater. Any such force must of necessity contain a considerable proportion of infantry. The use of a regimental combat team as the nucleus of such a task force thus appears more logical than the retention of armored

groups for the purpose. The inclusion of a tank regiment in the infantry division facilitates the formation of such a task force and further, it improves teamwork by the use of units familiar with one another.

8. Actual operations of armored groups in the European Theater indicates that the retention of armored groups is unjustified. Adoption of any or all of the recommendations referred to in paragraph 6 above will further reduce the value of the armored group.

#### SECTION 4

##### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9. Conclusions. Retention of the armored group is not justified.

10. Recommendations. It is recommended that armored groups be eliminated.

#### Bibliography

1. After Action Reports of:
  - a. 3d Armored Group for months of Jul, Sep, Oct, Dec, 1944 and Jan, 1945.
  - b. 6th Armored Group for months of Jul, Aug, Oct, Nov, Dec, 1944 and Jan, Feb, Mar, 1945.
  - c. 7th Armored Group for months of Jul, Aug, Sep, Nov, Dec, 1944 and Jan, Mar, 1945.
  - d. 8th Armored Group for months of Oct, Nov, Dec, 1944.
  - e. 17th Armored Group for months of Mar, Apr, May, 1945.
2. Final Report, First U. S. Army.
3. Letter, ETO to CG UK Base, Com Z, APO 413, subject: "Reorganization of 9th Armored Group", file AG 322 OpGC, dated 24 September 1944.